

Administrative Procedure 150

MEDIA RELATIONS

Background

As a public school board, Black Gold Regional Division No. 18, its programs, activities, and plans are of special interest to the public. It is important to present the Division in a manner that is both accurate and consistent with the Division's core values to avoid any misinterpretation.

Notwithstanding this, the Division has an obligation to protect its students and staff from unwelcome intrusions into the operation of its schools.

Procedures

1. The Communications Coordinator is responsible for coordinating media relations for the Division.
 - 1.1 Staff should redirect media inquiries/requests to the Communications Coordinator.
2. The Communications Coordinator shall:
 - 2.1 Provide advice on media matters.
 - 2.2 Prepare material such as statements, news releases, and background materials required by the Board Chair, Superintendent, or designate.
 - 2.3 Distribute these materials after approval by the Superintendent or designate.
 - 2.4 Distribute copies of the Board meeting dates to the local media.
 - 2.5 Coordinate a response and/or an appropriate spokesperson for the subject as required.
 - 2.6 Assist the schools with media relations.
3. As per Board Policy 5, Role of the Board Chair, the Board Chair shall act as the official spokesperson for the Board except for those instances where the Board has delegated this role to another individual or group.
4. Copies of all public service materials (print or audio/visual) released to the media shall be sent to the Communications Coordinator for information. Any such information is to comply with the Canadian Press (CP) Style and Division standards.

5. Media requests for interviews or access to school property may be coordinated through the Division's Communications Coordinator.
 - 5.1 Media are asked to include the following information with their request:
 - 5.1.1 Purpose of the story
 - 5.1.2 The type of disclosure being requested (interview, photos, video, other)
 - 5.1.3 Name and contact number of the reporter requesting the information
 - 5.1.4 Story timelines.
 - 5.2 Should a spokesperson not be available to respond to a request within the timelines provided by the media organization, the requested information may be made available in written form.
 - 5.3 There may be circumstances when a request cannot be honoured or is denied due to personnel issues, FOIP or timelines provided.
6. The Principal shall:
 - 6.1 Keep the Superintendent/Designate or Communications Coordinator informed of all relevant media situations and inquiries.
 - 6.2 Consult with the Superintendent/Designate or Communications Coordinator regarding the release of information to the media, particularly where there are sensitive inquiries.
 - 6.3 Approve all information released to the media from schools.
 - 6.4 Act as the primary spokesperson on general school-specific matters. A designated school spokesperson may speak with the media as required.
 - 6.4.1 Any employee or member of the school who is not a designated spokesperson shall not present himself/herself as a designated spokesperson for the school or any school department without prior approval from the Principal.
 - 6.5 Be informed promptly when any member of the school receives inquiries from the media.
 - 6.5.1 Staff should redirect the inquiry/request to the Principal.
 - 6.5.2 Provide guidance and direction to the staff members who are required to speak to the media.

7. At the discretion of the Principal, representatives of the media may be permitted into the schools for legitimate reporting and promotional purposes. Particular care must be exercised in protecting the rights of students when media are present.
 - 7.1 Media representatives shall not be allowed to disrupt the normal operation of the Division Office, a school, or a class for the sole purpose of information gathering. This includes the interviewing of Division employees and/or students during regular school day.
 - 7.2 Media representatives may be asked by the Principal or Division staff to leave the premises or grounds where it is deemed in the best interest of the students and staff to do so.
 - 7.3 In accordance with Administrative Procedure 180, Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) and the *FOIP Act*, when a news release is issued for a school event, the event is considered to be public and anyone in attendance may take photographs without first obtaining consent.
 - 7.4 Parental consent must be obtained before allowing those outside the school, including parents, visitors, or media, to take photographs of students in classrooms or at non-public events.
 - 7.4.1 Consent is required only if individual students are identifiable in the pictures.
8. In the event of an emergency, the Communications Coordinator will work with members of the Emergency Operations Centre, the Administrative Command Team and the School/Site Emergency Response Team to gather information and coordinator distribution to staff, students and the local community.
 - 8.1 In the event of an emergency or crisis situation, staff are asked to share only official information provided by the Division and shared in official Division messages such as email, news releases, etc.
 - 8.2 Any information on an emergency situation being pushed out by the Division originates with the Emergency Operations Centre and may be considered official public information. Other information should not be shared from unofficial or unverified sources.

Reference: Section 20, 27, 60, 61, 113 School Act
Administrative Procedure 180 – Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy
Board Policy 5 – Role of the Board Chair
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act